joy to be had in being a participant in and creator of love, communities of care, in the self-determined gifting and sharing of multifarious forms of loves and loving.

This is what the "Arab spring" in the place still called the Middle East, the "occupy" movement in the place still called the United States, and the "Maple spring" student strike in the place still called Quebec were born of and started to do in the early 2010s. This is the fresh air, the kiss of life, of all the uprisings globally of late. Love as desperately trying to break with the commodity logic. Love as freed and freeing verb. But also love as rainy some days, sunny on others, and snowy the next, as imperfect and unpredictable and surprising as any weather forecast, as a forever-unfolding process that's intricate, complicated, and beautiful because it's so messy, because it points to all that's good.

Love – crafted out of the cry and sorrow emanating from the weeping of my willow, as embodied in the struggle to bring all the shades of love into the beckoning, diffuse light of a new world.

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PS (because what would a love letter, even a revolutionary one, be without a PS?) In searching the term "weeping willow" online after writing this piece, I discovered these two factual gems on Wikipedia: "Willow roots grow widespread and are very aggressive in seeking out moisture; for this reason, they can become problematic when planted in residential areas, where the roots are notorious for clogging [systems]"; "The roots are remarkable for their toughness, size, and tenacity to life." To sabotage! To life! To love!

NOTE

"Shades of Love" was written in spring-summer 2012 for a pal's anarchist anthology on love, but they never ended up publishing the book and hence this essay hasn't seen the light of day. So at long last, I've turned it into a zine. May it touch your heart! Please share this "labor of love" zine freely and widely.

Thanks to dio cramer (diocramer.com, @dioishh) for creating a gorgeous original piece of art and lettering for the cover, based on willows carved into old tombstones. I honestly was overwhelmed with gratitude when dio offered to do it! Big shout-out yet again to Casandra (www.houseofhands.net) for turning my layout into PDFs.

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The park was the glittery bait to lure us into the confines of the classroom. It was where the mobile library arrived to loan us marvelous books, the ice cream truck came to sell us enticingly cheap sweets, and the community put on carnivals replete with face paint, balloons, and games. How could my lone willow compare to these?

Yet for my friends and I, the translucent bluish-golden-green curtain of leaves held a greater allure. It hid us – those of us who felt out of place in the harsh light of what passed for social reality – and equally welcomed the few others courageous enough to push past the leafy veil into and beyond the darkness, into our autonomous zone, and join us. Once inside, we plotted, dreamed, and schemed, since those outside – those who felt thoroughly at home in that world that wasn't ours – apparently couldn't see us, even though it was easy enough to glimpse our shadowy outlines. We were liberated to be as subversive as we chose. In terms of what we then thought were bold actions, mostly this translated into late-night forays to toilet paper trees outside the nearby houses of people we didn't like, but in our defiance, we both forged deep connections between each other – love – and tried to wreck havoc on all that wasn't loving in our tiny, youthful world.

And here's where the revolutionary potential of love makes an entrance in the shades of love. Not in the flat brilliance of love as we're told it should be, but in the gray areas and tones, spectrums and colorations, of love as it could be. In the variegated practices of loving relations, behaviors, and acts that create a canopy of lived goodness intertwining friends, lovers, bio- and chosen families, humanity, the nonhuman world, social movements, strangers, and ourselves. In the manifold ways in which we're able to emerge – with dignity and solidarity – from our shade trees, tree houses, forts made from cast-off branches, and the like, into our self-made commons because we're no longer scared of being alone, of going unseen, untouched, unheard. Because we know there is

Love can act like a shade tree, affording protection and retreat from the scorched-earth quality of contemporary society. Rather than being burned by it, even when it hurts, love as shade tree supplies subtle warmth, carried lightly on caressing breezes or in the sweet stillness. It is an interval of calm, a shelter that centers us.

Such respite is only temporary, though. And it isn't enough. Unless love is more, so much more, we ultimately have to venture into the stifling heat again.

So love must work its magic in and against the gathering darkness, from the shadows, which gladly camouflage all that is taboo, all that is repressed, prohibited, forbidden, unthinkable. All that is unimaginable. Not because we can't try to imagine it, of course, but instead because it's near impossible to grasp the qualities of love beyond the quantity of today's social order. To a great degree we have to be out of sight from what's considered normative, normal, or natural, or what's deemed legal by some, precisely so we can engage in risky experiments in what love can and ought to be. Risky because others likely will judge, condemn, imprison, or marginalize us in the here and now – or try to stop us altogether. But riskier still because although we're fully consenting to the unbearable lightness of making our own love, we can't be sure of where we're headed in this murky dimness. In this shadow world, we can only play with possibilities, hoping to make love animate a host of intimacies – physical, emotional, social, and more – like the comforting boughs of my willow tree on a spring day.

The weeping willow of my youth sat between our modest one-story rental home and a chain-link fence separating our backyard from a park and a playground surrounding an elementary school. For many of the neighborhood kids, that public area held far more promise than anything our circumscribed-square little yards supposedly could offer: "education!" yes, but also "liberty!" "equality!" "fraternity!"

When I was a little kid, we had this big weeping willow tree in our backyard, and when it was in full bloom, its slender overhanging branches would form a porous pale-green umbrella arching from sky to ground with expansive space underneath. Open space. Yet delicately screened too.

From inside, seated on the gently compacted earth, you could see outside, softly, through the millions of little leaves playing gaily as the wind touched them. You could look outward through tiny peepholes, which in turn let in winking shapes of light like stars on a crystal-clear night, with each glimmer held in the embrace of the shadows cast by leaf after leaf.

I recently asked my six-year-old bio-niece what she meant by the word "love," which she says several times a day to her mom, and she responded matter-of-factly, "Love is all that's good." She doesn't have a weeping willow in her Orlando-sprawl backyard; only crunchy-dry grass and a too-small palm tree and blindingly unmediated sunshine.

Still, maybe my niece is onto something.

There is an archaic understanding of the word "good" as intimately coupled in meaning with the word "virtue." Good as an ethical construct versus good as, say, a feeling, competence level, or commodity. If love is a verb – which to my mind it is, or at least always ought to be – then perhaps its defining quality is wholly about striving toward goodness, about doing good in the world, and about doing good toward others and oneself.

Of the otherworldly home created by my bluish-tinged weeping willow, I have only hazy memories, yet all of them elicit senses of goodness – variegated sensations, like the variegated foliage that made this permeable hideaway into what I now understand as a space of love. Or maybe it was

one of my earliest teachers about where love happens, where we find it: not in the sun, but in the shade.

Some years ago, as the US government was ratcheting up its war on terror, I was part of an ongoing study group composed mostly of my chosen kin. My kindred anarchist crew and I spent hours debating capitalism, from what it actually is to what language besides "anticapitalism" could remotely capture any notion of a moral economy in the future, much less a good society. We also intellectually argued about which, if any, various categories – such as ecology, direct democracy, or imagination – capitalism couldn't recuperate, or more precisely, might prove to be limits to it and thus linchpins in its undoing. Each category ultimately stumped us. And then someone proposed this: "love."

After hours and hours of more deliberation, and despite our seemingly genuine feelings for each other, love too fell under the weight of our scrutiny, crushed by the heaviness of commodification and its loveless partner, alienation.

Over a year ago, as Adbusters magazine was ramping up its wager on Wall Street, I stumbled on day four of Occupy Zuccotti Park, made up mostly of what looked like white, straight, clean-cut or grungy college-age folks (though obviously appearances can and should be deceiving). "Love" was everywhere, spelled out or denoted by a heart on signs, shirts, and skin, and repeated and amplified by mic check after mic check. This loving feeling was also often writ along queer-unfriendly lines, such as the cardboard placard propped up in front of one neo-hippie dude and his dog: "Free kisses (unless you're male)."

Yet after hours and hours in the increasingly congested space of what would soon stretch out across this continent and beyond as "occupy everywhere," I began to again perceive love not as a hollow slogan but instead as a heartfelt bulwark against the psychic impoverishment of present-day capitalism. I started to understand it as a catalyst for and even complement to resistance against the material impoverishment of capitalism as well – echoes of the love and rage asserted by anarchists not so long ago. Moreover, as the months that feel like years since the early days of Occupy Wall Street have gone by, I'm discovering the potential within one of the most tender of revolutionary slogans: "We carry a new world here, in our hearts." What if we shifted this from mere words into the slightly reworded practice of enacting "a new world here, from our hearts" – as an integral, prefigurative component of social transformation? What if we also reworded it as the basis for why we want to reorganize society – "a new world here, for our hearts"? Where would that loving world be situated?

This has led me to return, metaphorically, to my weeping willow and its shades of love.

Capitalism, along with related yet distinct forms of unfreedom such as heteronormativity and racism, artificially elevates love to the light – a bedazzling illumination akin to the sensation of Times Square and Las Vegas; a furnace door flung open, igniting the red-hot flames of love-as-sex. From the glare of paparazzi flashbulbs to glossy airbrushed magazine covers and exotic tropical-beach vacation ads, from the happy endings of big-budget romantic comedies to the glistening sweat on the glistening bodies of models in grainy B&W billboard photos – all that is love melts under the kiss of capitalism. Those are the easy images, and only a fraction of the shiny surface of what breaks our hearts, minds, and bodies. Far worse is the very way we envision love, deep in the old world of our hearts: as sunny and bright, as simple and uncomplicated, as the perfect sunset perfectly completing our perfect selves after a sun-drenched day. Love as an enslaving and enslaved noun.

Humans and numerous other creatures and plants need warmth. On a basic biological level, we need to take in sunlight. On an emotional level, it doesn't hurt either. But love in a time of capitalism can, I think, only thrive in the shadows.